

Church of God, The Eternal

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Results of the Conference to Seek God's Will for Us

December 1975

Dear Brethren:

As promised, information concerning the conference which was recently completed will be given. Further, much more information concerning the actual work which is to be accomplished in these difficult times will be related.

Answers to those most perplexing problems of our times can be found in The Bible. As the ministers convened, they were confident that solutions to the questions would be ascertained. That air of optimism exuded from all. It was merely a need of reducing the situation to relevant questions and then assigning responsibility to thoroughly study and prepare papers covering those questionable areas. This was done. The results were fantastic. God, indeed, did show us what needs to be done at this present time. He had promised to lead and to provide the necessary direction. No one doubted the validity of that promise.

Our concern was that of ascertaining just what God would have us to do. Was there a specific work which we should be doing? Is there any historical or prophetic example of a transfer of responsibility? What are the indications of specific works to be done in the last days? We knew there would be a departure from the truth. Many prophecies of the New Testament revealed such a condition for our time. As a result of that departure, was there any indication of what obedient servants would be doing? What responsibilities they would hold, or just what relationships would be experienced? These were very sobering questions. No minister present was intent upon any defiant activity contrary to that which is allowed by God. We had to be sure. It is only a fool who would defy conscience and toss aside the fear of God in seeking out answers to such perplexing questions. We are grateful that our God did show us what He expects at this time. The Bible is man's instruction manual for this time as well as any other time of human existence.

God specifically tells us to avoid doubt and worry. Paul was inspired to write in Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." There had to be answers. God was not going to leave His people in the valley of decision. Those answers did come, and unitedly at that. For all that help we wish to proclaim our love, respect and worship, for He is worthy.

All Must Be Taught

It must be understood, we came to the knowledge of the truth through one to whom God had spoken. See John 19:1–5. There are many ways by which God speaks to human individuals. He must call, train and send. Through the teaching of that servant, others are brought to the knowledge of the truth. In all the Bible there is no indication of individuals being personally and directly taught of God and coming to perfected knowledge of that way of life. Yes, we are individually called, but we must be added to the Body of Christ or become part of the Vine. Paul made this very clear in Romans 10:13–15. He said:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

All must be taught. We must be taught by one who is sent. That one who is sent must be the bearer of a way of life given to him. Moses was given the message directly. The apostles were taught exactly what they were to teach to others before they were commissioned. Paul was taught the gospel and way of life before he was sent. And Jesus Christ was a prime example. He was given the message directly from God, the Father, before He was sent. Then, once that message was taught and the servant qualified, he could not alter or change the message. It was the eternal message from God. The way of life which does not change.

There can be no change of foundational basics or destruction of the components of that way. Otherwise, how would any chosen servant know how to properly evaluate those whom he is required to follow? How would any Christian know when to unswervingly hold to the truth and refuse to allow any change in his beliefs?

God is the Teacher. All must be taught of God (John 6:44–45). It becomes the responsibility of God to call, train, teach and *send* His representatives. As His chosen vessels, He requires loyalty and faithfulness to that which was committed to him. He must teach others the same way. He cannot alter or change it.

Paul is an example of this very responsibility. Let us carefully note Philippians 4:9. He was inspired to write: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Could it be more clear? Those whom God had called through the Apostle Paul were to continue in those things which they had learned from him. Not those things which are consistently changed. No, those things which Paul received from God, those concepts he was obliged to teach to peoples to whom he was sent. The people were then obligated to remain consistently loyal to that way of life which they had initially received.

No Appropriated Roles

No one can be a teacher of God's law and His way of life unless called and commissioned. In like manner, one cannot assume any prophetic role. God must reveal the spiritual intent of the prophecies which are written for us. Even though recorded in the Bible, the intent still must be revealed by God (2 Pet. 1:19–21). Peter emphatically states, the chosen vessels of God were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual intent cannot be ascertained individually. God must reveal the meaning. There is a very simple manner of determining if the man is sent as a prophet. If the event does not come to pass, God says you can know that He did not send him. The reasons are obvious. God knows the intent of the prophecy. When He sends a servant to warn others, He equips him with the correct knowledge. The events come to pass. The warning is substantiated.

Up to this point we have determined that one or a group cannot establish a "work" of his own. Further, if God does not call and equip an individual, he cannot be a prophet. Yet, all New Testament prophecy, and to some extent, the prophecies of antiquity reveal a major departure from the truth to transpire in these last days. But until God calls that prophet to warn, no one should dare assume such a responsibility (Amos 3:7). But, what do the faithful and loyal servants do? They must not remain in the company of those who practice evil or who espouse strange doctrine. Every indication Biblically is that they would be separate. A small group which will be driven about. There is an internal responsibility. It is of monumental magnitude. All external responsibilities will come at appropriate times, by the will of God and His specific commission. Until then, the

sobering and requisite requirement: wait patiently for God. He knows the times and the circumstances.

We are the Vineyard of God. No one may assume rights or responsibilities independent of the owner's wishes. Since we belong to God and the operation is His, we must wait for His selection and dispatch. He will choose the laborers to work in *His vineyard*.

Our Work

If we may not assume or appropriate any official role to ourselves, what should we presently do? Surely there must be some indication of what God expects of us. Indeed, there is! To perform, we need to know what the work of God is. God calls and then develops character in His chosen. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That is the most awesome task undertaken by our Creator. He spoke the Word and brought worlds into existence. The development of character and the reconciliation of all humanity to Himself requires a God-ordained plan of 7,000 years. That work can be understood best by comparing John 6:29 and John 17:2–3.

At the present time, due to a major departure from the truth (Matt. 7:13–14; Luke 12:32 and 2 Peter 2:1–2), there will be but a small handful who will remain faithful. It is going to be a ridiculed and persecuted group. They will bear within their bodies the marks of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

But what IS the real purpose for their existence, NOW?

The body is one. Doctrine is singular. And only one Lord and Master. The Church is that body. Obviously, there must be an agreement and harmony among the members of that one body.

As the First Century illustrates, the faithful servants were either put out of the church or were forced to avoid those who practiced evil. The physical organization continued. It was still the church as people viewed it. To this day, that organization claims to be the only true body of believers. Yet, in actual fact, the true believers were forced out of the physical organization and were driven together due to persecution and intense desire to be spiritually loyal to their God and Savior.

Numerous texts dealing with our times give specific instructions relative to our relationships and responsibilities. If one body, though limited in number, it must be bound together in absolute harmonic agreement. We should all be speaking the same things (1 Cor. 1:10). Those things must be what Christ taught—what was foundationally revealed to us in our era of time. Further, character must be manifested. That character is the same as observed in the life of Christ. We are what we eat! This is an actual truism, both spiritually and physically. See John 6:47–57. If we are partaking of Christ, we will be thinking and living in the same manner Christ lived. We will be Christians—that is, Christ-like. Christ was completely submissive to the Father. He said, He did not do the works but the Father which dwelt in Him did the works (John 14:10).

Christ came to reveal the Father. How? By the fact He emptied Himself and allowed the Father to live completely in Him. Christ's actions and thoughts were those of the Father. He was the personification of the Father, the express image.

In exactly the same way, we are not doing our own works. No, Christ which dwells in us, He is doing the works. The extent to which we allow Christ to live within us, Christ allowed the Father to completely dominate Him, is the manifested scope of the activity and work of Christ today. Since Christ does not change, then that work, the way of life, does not change. It is by that fact alone, in the time of consistent mobility and change, that Christ will be revealed. He is revealed in us. If He were recognized and accepted in His own body, then He will be accepted in us. However, if He was not accepted, which He wasn't by the world, then He will not be recognized and accepted in us today. For those whose eyes are anointed, they will see and understand.

Your Responsibility

All who are reconciled to the Father must come through Jesus Christ. Obviously, time, conditions and circumstances do not change the way of life. Conformity to the ways of the world is a blatant denial of Christ.

How can we know who is truly converted and in whom—through the Holy Spirit—resides Christ? At any time, but especially in times of confusion, it is imperative to differentiate between the TRUE (singular) and all counterfeits! Our lives depend on that capability and the added requisite ingredient of FAITH to see us through all turbulent storms of doubt and fear. The test is relatively simple. Christ taught via parable: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). He further said:

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. *But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?* (John 5:43–47)

What is your responsibility? Is it to stand adamantly on your own, newly acquired, conceptions or beliefs? John was inspired to write, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20). Again, Paul wrote, relative to these difficult times: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12–13).

Brethren, if we come in our own name proclaiming our own convictions and beliefs, do not believe us. Christ said the same thing to those He confronted in His day. What do you use as a test, a guide, by which to KNOW the responsibility incumbent upon you? To know those who labor among you? Paul illustrated the point abundantly (obviously predicated upon conditions and events of his own time). He wrote to the Colossians: "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught . . .*" (Col. 2:6–7) He wrote to Timothy: "*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them . . .*" (2 Tim. 3:14). Further, he wrote to Titus: "*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*" (Titus 1:9).

Could anything be more plain? The word is written for all generations. Those instructions are for us. We are obligated to hold to the truth as we were initially taught. That requires faith just as it did in the days of Paul. All too frequently we can look back in retrospect and convince ourselves that if we had lived in the days of Christ, the Prophets, or the time of the Apostle Paul, we would have known and understood their inspiration. Yet, those who so viewed themselves in Christ's own day did not recognize Him. The people did not always accept Paul. In some cases, the people admirably accepted him (Gal. 4:14 and 1 Thess. 2:13), but how frequently did he write to justify his office and responsibility? Those writings form a part of the very Word of God. The whole basic principle can best be understood by quoting a verse of the instruction which Jesus Christ gave to the seventy disciples before sending them out. He said: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

That is a very exacting responsibility. It is for that reason God instituted very definite safeguards against the possibility of deception for those whose eyes are open and whose ears are unstopped. You are to try them. How? On the basis of that way which God originally gave them. If they departed from it, do not follow. The Bible is replete with instructions regarding this responsibility. On the other hand, you must KNOW them who do faithfully and loyally labor among you. You, too, must be faithful in your responsibility.

God is going to know those who are faithful and loyal. Many tests are going to be administered. Read and study the following texts: Deut. 13:1–5; 1 Cor. 11:19; 1 John 4:1; and Heb. 12:18–29. Compare Num. 12:2–11 with Heb. 12:18–29. This should be an interesting study for you.

Why do so many fail to come through? Are they completely spiritually asleep? Many are (Rom. 13:11–14), but for the most part other factors play a significant part. Some are fearful. They are locked in due to fear and the inability to correctly evaluate. Read John 12:42; John 9:22; and John 16:2. Further, far too many did not count the cost. Little did they realize the price which would be required to hang on to the truth of God.

But, brethren, we are not of those who are fearful, lacking the spiritual courage to act on faith. God has kept us from falling into the rampant disease of spiritual lethargy. Even so, the goal is not yet achieved. One major danger must yet be hurdled. We must not draw back into perdition. See 2 Pet. 2:20–22 and Heb. 10:35–39. It is only the individual who endures to the end who shall be saved (Matt. 24:13 and Gal. 6:9).

Some will yet be tried. Each must make a final decision. No one else can make that decision for you. The example was quite precise in the case of Christ: those appointed to life understood and responded, but those who were devoid of faith turned back and followed Him no more (John 6:64–66).

Unity

In the final analysis, what does God want us to achieve at this present time? That mission and responsibility is of more value than all other circumstances put together. For by the achievement of that objective, the whole world will ultimately become aware of Christ and the true way of life. Christ stated it very simply in John 17:21–23:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The above situation is possible only if we believe that message was sent to a chosen apostle, that the truth was initially delivered and taught, and that we heard the voice of Jesus Christ through his servant to whom we responded and were baptized. By that means we can be ONE. The world will then know that Christ lives within His servants. They will be perfect in ONE. What glory. But, at the same time, what an awesome responsibility. With God's help we can do it. We can live that kind of life, if we can divest ourselves of self as Jesus Christ emptied Himself and became the receptacle for the life and purpose of the Father.

With that spirit and attitude, God then can use us for whatever specific responsibilities He may have in mind. We may not assume them. He will grant them as He is convinced His servants are qualified. For now, brethren, with the help of God, let us perfect that which is lacking. I know we can do it.

With deepest love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Raymond C. Cole